

September 7, 2022

The Honorable Anne Milgram
Administrator
U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration
8701 Morisette Drive
Springfield, VA 22152

Dear Administrator Milgram,

I write with concern over recent reports of seizures, including in Missouri, of so-called rainbow fentanyl.¹ This new form of brightly-colored fentanyl is particularly concerning as it seems designed to resemble candy and appeal to children and teenagers.

The United States continues to grapple with an epidemic of overdose and addiction in Missouri and across the nation. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 107,622 Americans died of drug overdoses in 2021, a new annual record. Fentanyl, due to its potent addictiveness and lethality, is the main driver of this epidemic and was responsible for the deaths of 71,238 Americans last year, a 23 percent increase over 2020.² In Missouri, fentanyl and its analogs were responsible for 1,204 overdose deaths in 2020, constituting 64 percent of all overdose deaths in the state.³

On August 30, 2022, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) issued a warning about so-called rainbow fentanyl, which your agency says is a “deliberate effort by drug traffickers to drive addiction amongst kids and young adults.”⁴ The warning noted that the DEA has seized brightly-colored fentanyl in 18 states and that the drug is being found in all forms, including pills, powder, and blocks resembling chalk. Two of the recent seizures occurred in St. Louis, Missouri.⁵

Issuing a warning is a step in the right direction. But it is not enough. We should stop the flow of deadly drugs across from the southern border, seize all rainbow fentanyl contraband, and imprison all who manufacture and distribute these horrible drugs.

So that Congress can consider remedial legislation, please provide the following information by September 15, 2022:

¹ <https://www.ky3.com/2022/08/22/warning-parents-rainbow-colored-fentanyl-found-st-louis-young-people-are-targeted/>

² https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/nchs_press_releases/2022/202205.htm

³ <https://health.mo.gov/news/newsitem/uuid/8a7cef2f-64e2-46a1-ba51-c6a4194762ef#>

⁴ <https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2022/08/30/dea-warns-brightly-colored-fentanyl-used-target-young-americans>

⁵ <https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2022/08/30/dea-warns-brightly-colored-fentanyl-used-target-young-americans>

1. Please detail how the DEA is working with state and local law enforcement to raise awareness of rainbow fentanyl.
2. Please detail how the DEA is working with primary and secondary schools to inform parents and their children about the prevalence of rainbow fentanyl and how to identify it.
3. The DEA's recent warning about rainbow fentanyl notes that Mexican drug cartels are responsible for the majority of fentanyl entering the United States. What steps is DEA taking to combat fentanyl trafficking by these cartels?
4. How is the DEA coordinating with Customs and Border Protection to stop the smuggling of rainbow fentanyl and other drugs into the United States?
5. Is the DEA coordinating with Mexican law enforcement to trace the origins of this new form of fentanyl?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh Hawley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Josh Hawley
United States Senator